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SPIRITUAL COUNSEL:

OR, THE Father's Advice TO HIS CHILDREN.

Hear ye Children the Instruction of a Father, and attend to know Understanding, Prov. 4. 1.

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Advertiſement.

THIS little Manual of Spiritual Counſel, was at firſt undertaken and compoſed by the Author for the Private Uſe of his own Children; but upon a Review, it being thought as uſeful to others as to them, he was induced to make it publick for the Common Good. And that the rather, partly becauſe the Contents of theſe Papers (tho directed to his own Children) are of general Concernment, and ſuch as are calculated for People of all Ages and Conditions; and partly for the greater Security of the Copy, which in a private Manuſcript

would be in great danger of being lost; but by being Printed would be better preserved for the use of those for whom it was first design'd. And as the Printing of it secures it from being lost one *way, so 'tis the Author's Serious Wish and Prayer, that the Pious Care and Attention of those that peruse it, may hinder it from being lost* another.

SPIRITUAL

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Father's Advice

TO HIS

CHILDREN.

My Dear Children,

IF ever you live to Maturity of Age, and I happen to die before you do so, remember and consider the Words of a careful and affectionate Father, touch'd with a most lively Concern both for your Present and Future

Welfare, but chiefly your Future, that of your precious and immortal Souls, which must be either Eternally Happy or Miserable in another World, according as you live and demean your selves in this. And therefore,

I.

Be sure that you dedicate your tender Years to the Service and Glory of God, and that you remember your Creator in the days of your Youth. You will then have most need to remember him, and you will then be most apt to forget him. Set therefore a double guard upon that part of your Life, and be

be then especially diligent to remember and be mindful of him that made you. It will make your Duty easie, and your Lives Happy. You will have the Comfort of it when you come to Die, besides the constant Satisfaction it will afford you all your Lives long.

II.

And as you make Religion your *First*, so be sure you make it your *Greatest* and chiefest Care: Not a *By-work* (as the general manner of the World is) but your Principal Concern, the great Business and Employment of your whole Life. For indeed Religion is your Greatest Con-

cernment, & therefore ought to be your main Buſineſs and Employment. *Solomon* tells you, That to Fear God and keep his Commandments is the Whole of Man: And a Greater than he, That 'tis the One thing Needful. 'Tis *For* this that you have your Being in this World, and 'tis *By* this that you can hope for a Well-being in that which is to come. Your eternal Happineſs depends upon it, and therefore as you tender that, ſee that you apply your ſelves chiefly to the Fear and Love of God, and the keeping of his Commandments; and that you make Religion the great Affair and Employment of your Mind and Life.

III. And

III.

And as you make it your Great, ſo be ſure you make it your *Daily* Employment; as you certainly will if you truly make it your Great one. Let not a Day paſs over your Heads without Serious Thoughts of God, and a due Performance of Religious Homage to him; and endeavour to ſpend every Day as well as you can, and to make every Day a Step towards Eternity. You do ſo in a *Natural*, and therefore take care you do ſo alſo in a *Spiritual* Senſe, making every day ſome Preparation for your Laſt; conſidering that you

know not when that will be, that you have but a few days in all to ſpend, and how precious every Portion even of the longeſt Life muſt needs be, upon which an *Eternity* depends. And therefore for your better Improvement of every day, I adviſe you,

IV.

To accuſtom your ſelves upon your firſt waking in the Morning, to Meditate ſeriouſly upon God, to offer to him your firſt Thoughts, and moſt ſolemnly to dedicate to him your ſelves, your Souls and Bodies, your Deſigns and your Undertakings, and the whole

whole ſucceeding day, which in all likelihood will be the better ſpent for having been ſo happily begun. And as you thus begin the day with God, ſo let it end with him too, making him the laſt ſubject of your Meditations when you lie down in your Beds, and as you compoſe your ſelves to your nightly Reſt; that ſo you may both Wake and Sleep in God.

V.

The two Extremities of the day being thus ſecured, there will be the leſs danger of Mis-ſpending the middle parts of it. But for the better Security and Improvement

of these, let me advise you in General, to accustom your selves to make Solemn Prayers to God in Private upon your Knees, at least three times a day, (besides occasional and less solemn Ejaculations) and as much oftner as you find your selves disposed. And if these times be fix'd and stated to some certain Hours so much the better, that so the return of the Hour appointed may as a Natural Instrument, put you in mind of your Devotions.

VI.

To make which the more Orderly, pray take care, that the first thing that you do in the

the Morning, as ſoon as you are up and conveniently habited, be to Sanctifie and Hallow the day, by a ſolemn devotional Addreſs of your ſelves to God in Prayer. Let this be the firſt thing you do, I mean before you take any Secular or Worldly thing in hand. For there is one certain thing that I would adviſe you to do even before you ſay your Prayers, and that is, to read as attentively and conſiderately as you can a Chapter in the Bible. This I would have you do every Morning before you go to your Prayers, which you will find to be a moſt excellent and advantagious Practice, not only as ſerving to inform

your Understandings, and bring you acquainted with the Holy Scriptures, but also to warm and quicken your Wills and Affections, and to tune your Souls, and put them into a due Composure for your following Devotion. For which the two other more solemn Seasons are, some time about the middle of the day, and at night when you go to Bed. At which time besides your ordinary Devotion, as in the other two, you would do well to take a Review of the day past, and particularly examine how you have spent it, not only that if you have done well you may glorifie God; and if ill, may humble your selves before

before him, and make your Peace with him before you commit your ſelves to ſleep, but alſo that by this Exerciſe you may know what progreſs you make in Piety, what the State of your Souls is, and how accounts ſtand between you and God; and may alſo learn to ſpend every day the better, as you will find your ſelves induced to do, by the very proſpect of that returning Account which you are to render of it to your ſelves at Night.

VII.

Beſides which *Nightly Review*, I think it very expedient that you ſhould ſet apart ſome

ſome certain Seaſons, wherein to ſit in more ſolemn Judgment upon your ſelves, to review and take account of your paſt Lives, to call your Sins to remembrance, to confeſs and bewail them, and to humble your Souls and Bodies in the Preſence of God for them, and to form new Reſolutions, and new Acts of Abhorrence and Deteſtation againſt them. Theſe days I would have to be purely and intirely days of Religion, to be wholly ſpent in Reading, Prayer, and Divine Meditation. Sequeſter your ſelves upon theſe days from all Worldly Buſineſs, retire from all Company, and let nothing be the Imployment of them, but

but what relates to the *Grand Affair.* And that these days may be thus strictly kept and spent, I would have their return to be but *Monthly*, suppose the first or last *Friday* in every Month. I the rather mention *Friday*, because it is one of the Church-Fasts, and I would have you make these days to be days of *Fasting* as well as of *Prayer*, that so both together may compleat your Repentance and Humiliation. The great Advantage of thus frequently making up your Accounts in these your Nightly and Monthly Reckonings, you will find to be chiefly this, that it will greatly contribute to the present Amendment of your Lives,

your

your Repentances thus keeping pace with your Miſcarriages; and to the eaſe of your Conſciences when you come to die. At which time you will find it work enough to ingage with your bodily Diſorders, and to attend to the proper Duties of your preſent Condition, tho you have not the Courſe of a whole Life to unravel, nor a train of Actions long paſt and long forgotten to bring to remembrance. And indeed 'twill be a ſad thing to have then Sums to caſt up, and Reckonings to make, when you are Sick and in Pain, and have neither Underſtanding, nor Memory, nor Leiſure, nor Will to recollect your ſelves.

VIII. In

VIII.

In these and all other times of your Devotion, let me further advise you to observe this General Rule, Never to put your selves into the Presence of God by Prayer, till you have first recollected your selves by awful thoughts of the Divine Majesty, and have by some short but serious Meditation, composed your Minds to a reverent and devout Performance of so Important and Divine a Duty. For besides that 'tis rude, and savours of Profaneness, to rush into the Presence of God without previous Consideration: He that approaches

proaches him so Irreverently at first, is not like to bespeak him with much greater Reverence afterwards. Therefore compose your Spirit before you begin, and be not like one that goes to play upon his Instrument before he has tuned it. 'Tis the Advice of a wiser Person than I, *Before thou Prayest*, says the Son of *Syrach*, *prepare thy self, and be not as one that tempteth the Lord.*

IX.

After you have thus duely disposed your *Heart*, then you may with decency proceed to bend your *Knee*. And whenever you Pray to God, be

be ſure you do it with all that Humility and Reverence that becomes a *Creature* and a *Sinner*, ſpeaking both to his *Maker* and his *Judge*, and with all poſſible affectionate Warmth and Fervour of Spirit; this being the very Life and Soul of Prayer, and the only thing that diſtinguiſhes it from pronouncing ſo many Words, or the going over in ones mind ſo many Thoughts. Let Earneſtneſs therefore and Fervour of Affection, be conſtant Ingredients in all your Prayers, eſpecially when you Pray for the Forgiveneſs of your Sins. Pray then yet *more earneſtly*, as your Saviour did in the Garden, when he was about to Suffer for them.

And

And sure one would think, that he who begs God to forgive him his Sins, and understands how great a thing he asks, and is sensible in what need he stands of it, and withall how unworthy to receive it, and considers the greatness of the Person of whom he begs it, and of the Price by which the very Possibility of it was purchased, and how much Goodness that is which bestows it, and consequently how high a Favour it must be in case he receive it, need not be further minded or admonish'd of being Earnest and Fervent in his Devotion.

X. But

X.

But that you may Pray Fervently, be sure you Pray *Attentively*. This is necessary to the other, as well as upon its own account, it being impossible that a Man should be moved or affected with what he either does not at all understand, or does not consider. But indeed these mutually help one another. Warmth of Affection will make Men Attentive; and Attention will help to procure and excite Affection. Be sure therefore that you use great Attention and Fixation of Mind in your Prayers, that you attend heedfully both

both to the Matter of your Prayers, and to that awful Majesty you Pray to, and that your Thoughts do not wander from either of them. Always remembring, that there can hardly be a greater piece of Irreverence, than to approach God by a Bodily Movement, when our Spirits are absent from him, and ingaged upon other Objects: That a Prayer so put up, is not only lost and thrown away, but profaned; and that instead of performing a Duty, we commit a Sin, by taking God's Name in vain. And let me tell you, that this is the worst way of taking God's Name in vain, because we do it so deliberately, and under

a pretence of worſhipping him. But that you may not be guilty of this, let me adviſe you,

XI.

Not only to that which by Spiritual Perſons is commonly adviſed in this caſe, *viz.* to Simplifie and recollect your Spirits by Silence and Repoſe, to be looſe and diſingaged from the World, to have as little Buſineſs and as few Deſires as may be; but alſo to accuſtom your ſelves, whenever you happen to hear the Name of God mention'd, to make a Reverential Pauſe, and form within your ſelves an inward Act of Adoration and

and Worſhip: Which you will find not only to be a good Practice in it ſelf, but alſo to tend to good, as leaving and fixing a Pious Impreſſion upon your Spirits; whereby you will become leſs apt to Profane that great and venerable Name in your more ſolemn Addreſſes, which you have thus accuſtomed your ſelves to reverence, when even occaſionally mention'd.

XII.

And as you take care that your Spirits accompany your Bodies in your Prayers, ſo let it be your next care that your Bodies accompany your Spirits.

rits. I mean that you joyn Bodily Worſhip to your Spiritual, and uſe the moſt lowly and reverential Geſtures and Poſtures that you can poſſibly put your ſelves into. Such as Bowing the Head, Elevation of the Hands and Eyes, bending the Knees, and even Proſtration it ſelf upon more Solemn Occaſions. And this not only becauſe God has a right to his whole Creature, and conſequently to the worſhip of the Body as well as of the Soul, but alſo becauſe Bodily Worſhip contributes mightily to the Advantage of Spiritual; and the Soul not only ſignifies and expreſſes her Devotion by the lowly Poſtures of her Body, but alſo

cheriſhes

cherishes and helps it forward. As some Men by acting an Angry Part, and putting on the outward Air of Resentment, begin at last to enter into the Spirit of that Passion, which they intended only to personate.

XIII.

If you find your selves tempted to lay aside Bodily Worship (as some have done and do) upon the Pretence of Worshipping God in Spirit and in Truth, I would have you look upon it as no other than a Suggestion of the Devil, who is willing to defraud God of one half of his due, the Service of the Body, under the

the Pretence of its being unneceſſary (tho he would fain have had it himſelf, when he would have bribed our Saviour to *fall down* and worſhip him) and your ſelves of that advantage which the Humiliations of your Bodies would derive upon the Diſpoſition of your Souls. But for your Satisfaction in this Point (not to trouble you with any Critical Remarks upon the Words *Spirit* and *Truth*) you need only conſider, that as God under the Ceremonial Law did not command the Worſhip of the Body without the Engagement of the Spirit, ſo neither does he now require that of the Spirit, without the Fellowſhip and

Communion of the Body. And that as a Religion consisting in Externals only, is not worthy of an Intellectual Nature, so a Worship purely Mental and Intellectual, is too Abstract and Sublime for a Nature allied to Sense, and depending upon it. But our Saviour is the best Interpreter of his own Law, and his Practice the best Comment. He to be sure was the most Spiritual Worshipper that ever was, and yet none more remarkable than he, for using Bodily Prostrations, from which he would not excuse himself even upon the Cross it self. For when he was to surrender up his Soul into the Hands of his Father, he did

did it in a Posture expressive of Reverence and Devotion, *He bowed his Head*, the Text says, *and gave up the Ghost*. But for this it may suffice, that God has given you a Soul and a Body in Conjunction, and you are to *Serve* and Worship *him* in the same manner as he has *made you*.

XIV.

But this composure of your Bodies into a reverential and devotional Posture, to which I advise you in your Closets, ought more especially to be regarded and observ'd in the publick Worship of God (that in the very Nature of

it, requiring visible Testimonies and outward Tokens of Veneration) which I would have you constantly to frequent in all the parts of it, especially those two so much disregarded and neglected by some of late (which yet are the only parts that properly deserve the Name of *Worship*) the Prayers of the Church, and the Administration of the Holy Sacrament. In all which let your outward Deportment, as well as inward Spirit, be Grave, Serious and Composed; such as becomes the Place and Presence you are in, and the Duties you are about, and that decent Respect which you owe to the Assemblies of the Saints.

XV. So

XV.

So much may ſerve for your Direction, as to the *Manner* of your Devotion. Concerning the *Matter* of it, I need only mind you, that Spiritual Bleſſings are the things you are chiefly to Pray for; and that thoſe are alſo the things for which you are chiefly to give Thanks. For which you have a plain Preſident in that Divine Form of Prayer commended to our uſe by our Lord himſelf, in which the Preference is ſo far given to our Spiritual Part and Concern, that there is but one Petition for the things relating to the Good of this

Temporal Life. And that too no farther than is requisite to our present Sustentation, *Give us this day our daily Bread.* In imitation of which it has pleased the Wisdom of our Church, in that large comprehensive Office call'd the *Litany*, or general Supplication, to have but one Clause of Prayer, that directly and expressly Petitions for the good of this Life, which is, *That it may please thee to give and preserve to our use the kindly Fruits of the Earth, so as in due time we may enjoy them.* From which ('tis observable) without dwelling long upon it, she immediately passes to the requesting of true Repentance and Forgiveness of Sins, with which

which she closes all. Wherein you may yet further observe, that tho the Church in great Wisdom, has thought requisite to have but one Prayer of this sort, and to drive off even that one among the last, yet with equal Wisdom she thought fit not to make it the last of all, lest such a Close of our Devotion should leave behind it a relish of Earthly Good upon the taste of the Soul. To prevent which she concludes with a Petition of an higher Nature, *That it may please thee to give us true Repentance; to forgive us all our Sins, Negligences and Ignorances, and to endue us with the Grace of thy Holy Spirit, to amend our Lives according to thy Holy Word.* XVI.

XVI.

To the Exercise of *Actual*, I would in the next place advise you to joyn the Practice of *Habitual* Prayer. By which I mean, that you would so accustom your selves to the Contemplation of God in and through all his Creatures, that none of those Objects which surround you, may ever present themselves to your Senses, without awakening the Idea of God in your Minds, and admonishing you of that absolute and intire Dependence you and all Creatures have upon him. So that where-ever you are, or with whom-soever you converse, or what-ever

ever your Buſineſs or Occupation be, you may always have a lively Senſe of God ever returning upon you, and mixing it ſelf with all your Ingagements, and Sanctifying even your moſt indifferent Actions; that your Hearts may be always flaming with his Love, and your Imagination fix'd and ſtay'd in his Holy Fear; your Paſſions being in profound Silence and awful Repoſe, and you your ſelves always ready and diſpoſed to perform thoſe more expreſs Acts of Worſhip, which in their proper Seaſons you owe to God. Whom however you may be truly and properly ſaid continually to worſhip, and ſo to fulfil

that Exhortation of the Apoſtle, of *Praying without ceaſing*, when you have learnt thus to carry about with you a conſtant Habit of Divine and Religious Thoughts.

XVII.

This *Habitual* Prayer is the Perfection of Devotion, and the trueſt mark of a Heart thoroughly warm'd and animated with the Spirit of Piety and Religion. The Images of thoſe things which we dearly love, will frequently return upon us, and we are always diſpoſed to give them entertainment as often as they offer themſelves. And from our doing ſo, we may conclude

clude how well we love them. And were the Love of God as thoroughly kindled in our Hearts, had we but the ſame Paſſion for him, that we have for ſome ſenſible Objects, we ſhould find his great Idea upon all occaſions preſent to our Thoughts, and that every thing would bring him to our Remembrance; our waking and our ſleeping thoughts would be upon him, and he would enter in upon us at every Senſe, we ſhould ſee him and feel him in all things, be always under a quick and affecting Senſe of him, and always in a ready Diſpoſition for his Worſhip and Service. Thus would the State of our Minds be, if we had them once

once truly touch'd with the Love of God, to which alſo this way of Habitual Prayer is the moſt certain and compendious Method, it being impoſſible that a Man ſhould ſo continually put himſelf in the Preſence of ſo amiable a Being, without being taken and raviſh'd with the Perfection of his Beauty.

XVIII.

But after all (my good Children) I would have you think and remember, that a juſt and upright Converſation is the beſt way of Worſhip, and a holy and good Life the beſt Prayer; and that then you ſerve God moſt acceptably,

ceptably, when you keep his Commandments, and live in constant Obedience to his Will. When in the Language of the Prophet you do justly, and love Mercy, and walk humbly with your God; or as the Apostle expresses it, when denying all ungodliness and worldly Lusts, you live Godly, Righteously, and Soberly in this present World. You may meet with some perhaps, that will tell you by way of reproach, that this is *Morality*. And you may tell them again, that they could not have call'd it by a better name. That it is such Morality as our Saviour taught in his Sermon upon the Mount, and of which his whole Life

was

was the moſt ſhining Example; ſuch Morality as was taught by his great Forerunner the Holy Baptiſt, and by all the Prophets that went before him, and by his Apoſtles that came after him. In fine, ſuch Morality as is abſolutely neceſſary to the preſent order of this World, and to the Happineſs of the next; to our Admiſſion into Heaven, and to our Enjoyment of God there, whom (as we are expreſly told) without Holineſs no Man ſhall ever ſee.

XIX.

Now in order to a Holy Life, I ſhall not think it neceſſary (at leaſt in theſe Papers

pers deſign'd for more particular Remarks) to deſcribe to you the ſeveral parts of it, they are ſo plainly and fully laid down in the Holy Scriptures, and ſo largely commented on and explain'd in thoſe many excellent Practical Treatiſes, which by the good Providence of God we of this Age and Nation enjoy. To which therefore I chuſe rather to refer you, adviſing you in the firſt place, to be very Diligent and Conſtant in reading the Bible, eſpecially the New Teſtament, and in that particularly our Lords Sermon upon the Mount, which you would do well to get by heart. And among Human Writings, recommending

ing to you chiefly Biſhop *Taylor*'s Holy Living and Dying, the Whole Duty of Man, Dr. *Sherlock*'s two Books of Death and Judgment, and *Thomas a Kempis* of the Imitation of Chriſt. Which laſt Book, tho not of ſo nice and artificial a Compoſure as the reſt, ſeems yet to be written in ſuch an excellent and truly Chriſtian Spirit, and to have ſuch a Vein of Piety and Simplicity running through it, as is beyond all the Fineneſſes and Imbelliſhments that Art can give. Leaving you therefore a while with this good Company, for a full Inſtruction in your Chriſtan Duty, I deſire, that after you have learn'd it, you would lend

your

your Attention to the following Advices, which I ſhall ſuggeſt to you for your better Aſſiſtance in the Practice and Performance of it.

XX.

The firſt great and general Inſtrument of a Holy Life is *Conſideration*, by which I mean the actual Attention and Advertency of our Minds to thoſe things, the Knowledge and Theory of which, we have already in Power and general Habit. This, in relation to Civil Action and Buſineſs, or the Management of Affairs, is call'd *Preſence of Mind*; but in the Concernment of Morality and Well-living,

living, it usually goes by the name of *Consideration*, and implies an actual View of those Practical Truths, whereof we have an habitual Notion or Knowledge. This, next to the Grace of God, is the great Principle of a Good Life; and the want of this is the main Cause, into which the Sin and Misery of Mankind is generally to be resolv'd. Infinitely more Perish through want of Consideration, than either through Ignorance or Infidelity. Ignorance, indeed, and Error, of one sort or other, I suppose to be the true Cause of all our Miscarriages, (for if we Thought rightly, we should Will and Act rightly too) but as actual Ignorance

is

is more common than Habitual, ſo I ſuppoſe more Men to Miſcarry through Actual than through Habitual Ignorance, that is, for want of *Conſidering*, than for want of *Knowing*. Let me therefore adviſe you in the firſt place, and in general, to apply your ſelves, with all poſſible Care and Diligence, to the Practice of Conſideration; to have in your Minds a preſent and actual View of thoſe things which you know, both concerning your Duty, and the ſeveral Motives and Ingagements to the Performance of it. Ever remembring that 'tis not the knowing a great deal, but the due conſidering of that little a Man knows, that

muſt

must make him either *Wise* or *Good*.

XXI.

Now among the particular Objects of Consideration, I think it advisable that you should, by repeated Reflections, endeavour to fix and imprint upon your Minds, and have always in actual View *this Thought*, That *Sin is the Greatest of all Evils*. Which Sentiment, as long as you preserve a bright and clear Sense of it in your Understandings, will secure your Wills from all possibility of Error. 'Tis the losing the View of this Truth, by some Cloud of Passion intervening, that makes

makes Men Sin; and 'tis the recovering of it again, that, next to the Grace of God, leads them to Repentance. Now the ſame Principle that makes Men repent after they have ſinn'd, would, if then duly attended to, have kept them from Sinning. As this will certainly do. For it being impoſſible that a Man ſhould will Evil as Evil; he that commits Sin, muſt for that inſtant think it at leaſt a *Comparative* Good, which he can never do, if he actually thinks it the greateſt Evil (there being then no greater Evil ſuppoſed, in reſpect of which it may receive that Eſtimation) and conſequently can never commit it, while he continues actually

actually in that Judgment, unless you will suppose him to will Evil formally as Evil, which is utterly impossible. Take great care therefore, to have this Principle well lodg'd and fix'd in your Understandings, That Sin is the *Greatest Evil*.

XXII.

This Consideration will suggest to you another, as the Consequence and Improvement of it, which is, That Sin must necessarily be repented of one time or other. There is an unavoidable Necessity for it. I do not mean only a conditional Necessity, if we will be pardon'd, but that it is simply

ſimply and abſolutely neceſſary, that is, That the Judgment of Sins being the greateſt Evil (however ſilenc'd and interrupted for a time) will infallibly return again upon us; and we muſt and ſhall one time or other repent of it, and wiſh we had never committed it, either in this Life (if we be ſo happy) in order to our Pardon and Salvation, or at leaſt in the other, when the Powers and Faculties of our Souls ſhall be more awakned, and our Spiritual Eyes ſo open'd, as to ſee things in their proper Colours, and in their true Dimenſions. Now conſider this, eſpecially when you find your ſelves tempted to any Sin. Conſider then, what you

you are about to do, a thing that you must again undo, and wish, one time or other, that you had never done, and so whether with such Thoughts about you, you can be guilty of such a Folly.

XXIII.

But to render this Consideration of Sins being the greatest Evil, and an Evil consequently that must and will be repented of the more effectual, my next Advice is, That you would joyn to it the Consideration of the utter Emptiness and Vanity of all those Pleasures and Enjoyments which tempt to the Commission of it. A thing which

which every Man's Reaſon *may* ſuggeſt to him, and which every Man's Experience *does*, and yet which ſo few are actually, and in all Inſtances convinc'd of; that forgetting their Diſappointments, they run again as greedily to their Enjoyments, as if they had never made trial of their Vanity. Inſomuch that the great Wiſdom of *Solomon* gave proof of it ſelf in nothing, more than in having obtain'd at length (tho late) a thorough Senſe, an abiding Conviction, of the Worlds Vanity, which was the top of his Wiſdom, and the reſult of his many Experiments. Endeavour therefore to poſſeſs your Minds of the like Con-

viction, and to fortifie your former Consideration, of Sins being the greatest Evil, with this additional Perswasion, of the Vanity and Nullity of all those Pleasures which may allure to the Commission of it, that so having lightned this opposite Scale of the Ballance, as well as added weight to the other, this last, by this further advantage, may not fail to weigh down; and you may be effectually secured from transgressing your Duty, when the *Evil* of it appears so *great*, and the *Pleasure* so *small*.

XXIV.

Which that you may be, extend your Thoughts yet further,

further, and consider with your selves, at what rate, and to what degree, God hates Sin. God who is infinite Wisdom, and infinite Love, all whose Wills are govern'd and directed by the eternal Rules of Order and Reason, and are from all Eternity form'd and laid out in Number, Weight, and Measure, who assigns to every Object its due Proportion of Love and Hatred, loving nothing but what is truly Lovely, and so far as it is such; and hating nothing but what is truly hateful, and so far as it is such. I say, consider how this great and just Dispenser of his Love and Hatred hates Sin; and let your Hatred of it take its measure from his.

And if you would know how great this his Hatred of Sin is, you may measure it with the same Line wherewith St. *John* does his Love towards Mankind, *So God loved the World*, says St. *John*, *that he gave his only begotten Son*, &c. And so may we say, So God hated Sin, that he gave his only begotten Son to be a Sacrifice and an Atonement for it. God's Hatred to Sin, was, it seems, so great, that he himself only could pacifie his Anger for the Commission of it; which also was so great, that he chose rather that his own beloved Son should bleed and die for it, than that it should go unpunish'd. And now consider with your selves,

ſelves, whether you can conceive a greater degree of Hatred than this. How could God poſſibly hate Sin more, or How could he give a more ſenſible and convincing Demonſtration of his Hatred of it? And if God thought it Juſt and Meet to puniſh Sin ſo ſeverely in the Perſon of his own Son, who alſo was ready to ſink under the weight and burthen of it, tho but for a few hours under it; then conſider yet further with your ſelves, how heavy the Stroke of Divine Juſtice will fall upon all perſevering and impenitent Sinners, when having no Intereſt in the Paſſion of their Redeemer, they ſhall ſuffer as fully for

themselves, as if no Mediator had interposed; and how little they will be able to stand under the weight of God's Displeasure to all Eternity.

XXV.

To these Thoughts, concerning the Nature of Sin, and the Consequences of it, you may yet add a further Improvement, By considering that this is the only Evil which was thought worthy of the Undertaking of the Son of God to deliver us from. In the heighth of all that Love and Affection which the Compassionate Saviour of the World had for Perishing Mankind, he did not think it worth

worth his while to reſcue them from Pain, Sickneſs, Poverty, Diſgrace, or any of the common Afflictions and Uneaſineſſes of Human Life, no not even from Death it ſelf. All theſe he ſeems to have over-look'd, as beneath his Notice, and unworthy his Regard; however we are apt to think them the only Evils. Only Sin and Damnation appear'd to him to be Evils of ſuch a Magnitude, that he could not endure the thought of our being ſubjected to them; and to deliver us from theſe, was indeed thought an Undertaking worthy of a Redeemer from Heaven, and from the very Boſom of God. Conſider this, till the Conſi-

deration of it has given you ſome Idea and Apprehenſion of the Evil of Sin; if not ſuch as our Saviour had in the Garden, when he was about to ſuffer for it; yet at leaſt ſuch as may ſerve to deter you from the Commiſſion of it. And do not voluntarily plunge your ſelves into ſuch a State of Miſery, for the Prevention of which, and only for the Prevention of which, the Lord of Life was content to Die.

XXVI.

After you have thus arm'd and fortifi'd your Minds, by the Conſideration of the great Evil of Sin, turn your Glaſs upon

upon the contrary ſide, and let your next Proſpect be, of the Beauty and Excellency of Goodneſs and Vertue, of Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs. Conſider how highly reaſonable it is in it ſelf, and how becoming of you, as rational Creatures; how ſuitable to the order and end of your Beings; and how truly perfective of your Natures; how it conduces to the Inlargement of your Underſtandings, to the true Freedom and Redemption of your Wills (for *if the Son ſhall make you Free, you ſhall be Free indeed*) and to the Calm of your Paſſions; and indeed to the general Health, Pleaſure, Satisfaction, Tranquility, and

Repoſe of your Souls, which then enjoy moſt Content, when in due Frame and Temper, when their Thoughts are beſt govern'd, and their Wills and Movements are moſt Conformable to Order. Conſider that Goodneſs is the Natural State of the Soul, and how much ſhe is at eaſe, and how well ſhe feels her ſelf when in that State; as on the contrary, how reſtleſs and uneaſie ſhe is, how full of Pain and rational Diſplacency, when otherwiſe affected and diſpoſed, than by the Law of God, and that of her own Being, ſhe ought to be. Conſider what a Natural Relation and Connexion there is between Holineſs and Happineſs, that the

the latter is the neceſſary Effect and Reſult of the former; which procures and produces it as a Natural and Phyſical Cauſe; inſomuch, that the very inward Reaſon and Moral Diſtinction of Good and Evil, is taken from its Natural Aptneſs, or Unaptneſs, to the Intereſt and Happineſs of Human Life. Conſider, how of its own proper Nature, it tends to the true Advantage and Benefit of Man, in all his Capacities, both as a Solitary, and as a Sociable Creature; how it procures our Happineſs on Earth, and what a neceſſary Preparative and Diſpoſition it is (not only as a *Poſitive*, but as a *Natural* Condition)

to

to qualifie us for that of Heaven, the Fruition of God, into whose Likeneſs we muſt firſt awake before we can be ſatisfied with his Beauty, and be partakers of the Divine Nature before we can enjoy it. Conſider how pleaſant and full of Satisfaction a Holy Life is, in the preſent Exerciſe and actual Diſcharge of it; (there being no Joys like the Joys of Religion, and no Peace like the Peace of God) and how pleaſant and raviſhing upon the Review, eſpecially the laſt, when we come to look back upon a Life well ſpent upon our Death-beds, and can thence alſo with Comfort and Satisfaction look forward into the un-

con-

conceivable as well as unſpeakable Joys of Eternity, the laſt Crown and Reward of a Holy and well-order'd Life.

XXVII.

As a Corollary to this Conſideration, let me ſuggeſt to you another: Whenever you are tempted to Sin by *Pleaſure* (for that's the great Bate and Allurement to Sin) conſider that the Pleaſures of Innocence are much greater, even at preſent, ſetting aſide all regard to *After-Happineſs*, much more if that be alſo taken into the account. And that therefore the true Queſtion or Competition does not

not lie here, whether you will do your Duty or enjoy Pleasure (for you may do both;) nor whether you will chuse to Sin or want Pleasure (for you may do neither;) but whether you will enjoy the Pleasures of Sin, or the Pleasures of Innocence and a Holy Life; the Pleasures of Sin that are but for a Season, or the Pleasures of Righteousness that endure for ever. This you will find (if you well attend to it) to be the true State of the Question, whenever you are tempted to Sin; and by putting it into these Terms, you will quickly perceive the Absurdity of the strongest Temptation wherewith the Devil can assault

assault you. Therefore consider it well.

XXVIII.

And when you have let your Thoughts sufficiently expatiate upon this great and double Prospect of the Evil of Sin, and the Reason and Advantage of a Holy Life, let them transport you for a while into the other World, among separate and departed Spirits, those whose Season and opportunity of Action is over, upon whom the Sun of Grace as well as of Natural Life is gone down; and that Night come in which no Man can work; and who are either in actual Happiness and

and actual Misery, or at least in a certain and unalterable Order and Designation to those respective States. Consider with your selves seriously the Condition of these Spirits, and what Thoughts and Sentiments they have of things. What they think of a sinful, and what Sense they have of a holy and religious Life. What inward Rejoycings, and raptures of Spirit those have, who were so Wise and Happy, as to apply themselves to the latter; and how they do now justifie and approve their Conduct, blessing and admiring the Grace of God. And with what Anguish, Rage, Self-condemnation and Regret, those return upon them-

themſelves, who lived and indulged themſelves in the former. What Retractations! What Repentances! How do they unwiſh their Thoughts and their Actions, their Deſigns and their Undertakings, their Buſineſs and Employments, their Leagues and their Friendſhips, their Converſations and their merry Meetings, their Jeſts upon Religion and upon good Men, yea and their very *Being*! How do they unwiſh all theſe things; and how paſſionately do they wiſh again for thoſe Opportunities which they once had; and what a value do they ſet upon that Time which they can never again recover, and which

which you perhaps mis spend and trifle away!

XXIX.

But that you may no longer do so, consider that Eternity is the only considerable State of Man, and that therefore the great and proper Business and work of time ought to be, to make Preparation for it. Consider, that after a Man has lived so long in the World, as to come to the Use and Exercise of his Reason, it will be high time to think of going out of it again, and to prepare for that World which is to last, and wherein he is to continue for ever. For 'tis so late before

we come to the Uſe of our Reaſon; and the reſt of the time we have to ſpend here afterwards is ſo ſhort, and withall ſo very uncertain, that the longeſt liver had not need to miſ-employ any part of his Time, but rather Study all the poſſible ways of improving it. Eſpecially if it be further conſider'd, that the Time of this Life is the only Opportunity for tranſacting the great Affair of Eternity. You have it now in your Power to be Happy, to make your great Fortune, and to ſecure your Final State; but it will not be always ſo. Your Day will end, and your Night will come, and God will not give you another

turn

turn of Probation, a ſecond Trial; and therefore it highly concerns you to make the moſt of this; and to work while 'tis Day, before the Night come, when no Man can work.

XXX.

If you are not yet ſufficiently moved and affected with a Senſe of theſe things, Conſider what ſentiments and apprehenſions of them, you will have when you come to Die, what your Notion and Senſe of things will then be; what you will then think of a good and of a wicked Life, of your ſelves and of the World you live in,

in, and are going from; what your thoughts will then be of all this Shew and Pageantry, which now ſo ſtrikes the Senſes, and engages the Hearts and Affections of Worldly Men: With what Contempt and Diſdain will you now look, now you are going out of the World, upon all thoſe Pomps and Vanities which you renounc'd at your coming into it; and how will you wonder at your ſelves and all other Men, for having been ſo often in love with them, and ſo long captivated and enſlaved by them; and for having ſo lately diſcover'd their utter emptineſs and deceit. Conſider how vain and inſignificant will then

then appear to you all those *little Great* things which the World is now so eager upon, and runs so mad after, Honours, Riches, Pleasures, State and Grandeur, Birth and Quality, Dignities and Preferments; nay, even *Wit* and *Learning*, every thing but a good Life and a satisfied Conscience; and how well you will then wish you had lived. These will then be your Thoughts, and this will then be your great wish. Endeavour therefore to have the same Thoughts now that you will have then; and to live now, as you will wish you had lived, when you come to Die.

XXXI.

XXXI.

And to make you the more ſenſible of this, that you may the better imagin to your ſelves that ſenſe of things which you *will* have when you come to Die, it would be a very advantageous Practice, frequently to recollect with your ſelves what your thoughts and apprehenſions of things *really were*; and what Sentiments you *actually had*, when at any time under a great and dangerous ſtate of Sickneſs. Recollect and conſider (which you may the more eaſily do, becauſe 'tis a thing of actual Experiment) what you then thought

thought of your ſelves, and of your Condition; of the Life that you had led, of the Time that you had miſ-ſpent, of the infinite Vanities and Follies you had been guilty of, of the Duties you had neglected, or but carelelly and imperfectly perform'd; and of the World of Sins you had committed, and it may be till then, had lived in without Repentance; and of the Hell which you had deſerv'd, and which for ought that you knew, you were then to be plung'd into, and for ever after to ſuffer in. Conſider I ſay, what thoughts you then actually had of theſe things; and withall, what ſtrong Reſolutions, Promiſes, and

and Vows, you then made to amend and reform your Lives in case it should please God to Reprieve you a little longer from the Sentence of Death, by restoring you again to your Health. Well, he has done so; you have recover'd your Health, and you have lost your Thoughts and Convictions. But what a strange thing is this! Do you think that your Health makes any real Change in the nature and truth of Things? Those things that were true in your Sickness, are they not as true now; and will they not be as true for ever? Or do you give greater Credit to your Well than to your Sick Judgment? But consider that

you would have the ſame thoughts when you are well, as you had in your ſickneſs, if you did but afford the ſame Attention, and had your ſpiritual Senſes equally awake, and your outward Senſes equally diſingaged from worldly Objects. Conſider therefore, that thoſe Sick thoughts are moſt likely to be true, and according to the right Ideas of things; and that therefore they will certainly return again when you ſhall be in the ſame Condition, and things ſhall be placed to you in the ſame Light. They will return again whenever you return to your ſelves, whenever you dare think; or if you ſhould by

by Arts of Diverſion Ward them off for a while, yet you will be ſure to meet with them again when within View of Death; for they are part of her Train and Retinue. But 'tis beſt to have them before, and to live in the full Senſe, and under the conſtant direction and government of them. And indeed I cannot give you better inſtruction in order to a holy Life, than, in one word, ſo to lead your Lives, as you *ſhall* wiſh when you come to *Die*, and as you *have* already wiſh'd when you were *Sick*. And that you may do ſo,

XXXII.

I further advise you, to be much in the Contemplation of the shortness and uncertainty of Life, and of the Day of Gods Grace; whose limits are equally uncertain, and perhaps, of a shorter and narrower compass than those of your Natural Life. Be as much also in the Contemplation of the four last things, Heaven, Hell, Death and Judgment. Place your selves frequently upon your Death beds, in your Coffins, and in your Graves. Act over frequently in your Minds, the Solemnity of your own Funerals; and entertain your ima-

imaginations with all the lively Scenes of Mortality. Meditate much upon the Places, and upon the Days of Darkneſs, and upon the Fewneſs of thoſe that ſhall be ſaved; and be always with your Hour-glaſs in your hands, meaſuring out your own little Span, and comparing it with the endleſs Circle of Eternity. Theſe are great & engaging Thoughts, and ſuch as will leſſen, contract, nay, even annihilate any thing that ſhall be placed together, and compared with them.

XXXIII.

There is indeed nothing that can diminiſh the Idea's

of these things to a Mind assured of the Truth of them, but only that which represents every thing little, *Distance* and *Futurity*. The greatest Objects when a great way off, appear but little to the Eye; and Futurity represents things after the same manner to the Mind. Even Heaven and Hell, and Eternity it self, when eyed through this end of the Prospective, lose their just and native Dimensions, and draw up into so many little Points, while in the mean time, this World of ours which really is so, by this one single advantage of being Present, makes a very bulky Figure, and appears as *Great* as it is *Near*.

Near. There is ſomething in the very Name of the *World to come*, that even to thoſe who are perſwaded of its future Exiſtence, leſſens the Idea of it. But you are to conſider, that this is a meer Fallacy of our *Imaginations*, as the other is of our *Senſes*. For diſtance of time can make no more real Change in the true and natural dimenſions of things, than Diſtance of Place can; and things Future, if of a certain and infallible event, ought to have the ſame Power and Moment with us as if they were preſent; for that they will be one time or other, or elſe they are not now truly *Future*. This therefore I ſay,

is a meer Fallacy of our Imaginations, to make the Futurity of a thing diminutive of its greatneſs. And tho it be a good Remedy againſt it, to remember that it is ſo, yet I think it would be a better, if in your Contemplations of theſe great Objects, you would no longer repreſent them to your Mind as *Futurities*, and things at a diſtance, but conſider them as *Preſent Realities*, as Objects that bear hard upon, and almoſt touch your very Eyes. Lay therefore the great and laſt Scenes of the Divine *Drama* often before you; place them in your very next View; and imagin every part of the dreadful Solemnity, as in preſent Tranſ-

Tranſaction. Imagin to your ſelves, that you now hear the Arch-Angels Trump ſounding to Judgment, and calling you and all the Sons of *Adam* out of your Graves to meet your Judge, and receive from him your final Doom. Imagin that you ſee him coming in the Clouds of Heaven with Power and great Glory, with his Angelick Attendance about him, and the Standard of the Croſs carried before him. That you ſee his Throne erected, the Judgment ſet, and the Books open'd. That you behold all Nations gather'd together before him, and the Dead, both Small and Great, ſtanding at the Bar of his Juſtice, and, with trembling,

waiting for the great deciding Sentence. Imagin that you see him making his Preparatory Division, separating them one from another, as a Shepherd divides his Sheep from the Goats; placing the Sheep upon his Right Hand, and the Goats upon the Left. And here stand a while and make a Pause, and imagin if you can, what Passions of Joy and Horror respectively, this preparatory Distinction will raise in the Parties concern'd, what a Deluge of Grief, Consternation and Despair, must overflow the Spirits of them, whose Lot is to be placed on the Left hand! And what Tides and Inundations of Joy and Consolation must break in

in upon those Happy Souls, whom their smiling Judge, as an Omen of his following Favour, places on his Right Hand. Who can imagin the Sentiments that will follow upon such a Signal, such a Fatal Difference! But if you would have some Notion of it, try it upon your selves, fancy your selves now placed on the Right Hand, now on the Left, and see with what different Sentiments you will be affected. But to go on, imagin now after this visible Distinction made of all Men, that you hear and see the Judge proceed to that which shall separate them for ever, the last and irrepealable Sentence, saying to those on his Right

Right Hand, *Come ye Bleſſed*, &c. and then to thoſe on his Left, *Depart from me ye Curſed*, &c. Imagin, if you can, how differently theſe two Sentences will be pronounced, and how differently they will be receiv'd. Then let your Imagination go on and attend the Bleſſed into Heaven, and the Damned into Hell, where both enter upon their reſpective Portions, the greateſt Happineſs and the greateſt Miſery, and that not for a few Months, Years, or Ages, but for a whole Eternity, without the leaſt *Hope* or *Fear* of any End. Make all theſe things as preſent to your *Minds*, as the things of this World are to your *Senſes*, lay them

them out thus before you, contemplate them at hand, and when by this Anticipation of thought you have thus Ante-dated the great things of Eternity, and have by that Faith, which is the Substance of things hoped for, and the Evidence of things not seen, given the next World the same Advantage that this has, that of being Present, you may then (as no longer living by Sense but by Faith) securely trample upon all those Temptations of the World, to which you see others, for want of this intellectual view, yield every day; and may make the World it self, with all its Pomp and Glory, vanish and disappear when you

you pleaſe. But for your further Security,

XXXIV.

Whenever you undertake any Set and Deliberate Action (for as for thoſe that are done by a ſudden prevention of Inſtinct, and as it were *Mechanical* Impulſe, as ſpreading out ones Hands when one is like to fall, they come under no moral Eſtimation) I would have you ſit down and conſider, whether you can any way refer that Action to the Glory of God; whether you can truly and ſincerely ſay, Lord, I do this Action for thee, and in regard to thy Honour and Glory. And in caſe

caſe the Nature and Quality of the Action be ſuch, that it will not admit of an Affirmative Anſwer to that demand, I adviſe you not to meddle with that Action. For as that Action which has no end at all, but is done by the mere force of Mechaniſm, is no *Human* Action, ſo that which has an ultimate end, ſhort of the Glory of God, and that does not terminate in him, can be no *good* Action. For God ought to be the End as well as the Beginning of all our ways; and even our moſt indifferent Actions ought to have a reference to his Glory, according to that general advice of the Apoſtle, *Whether you eat or drink, or what-*

whatsoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God.

XXXV.

But in case the Action be of a doubtful and uncertain Nature, and carry in it a double Appearance, so that you have some Diffidence and Suspence in your Resolutions about it, I would then advise you for the greater Security of your Innocence, to consider, what you think Jesus Christ, if he were now upon Earth, according to the Idea you have of him from the account of his Life in the Gospels, would do in such a case. Whether he who sought the Glory, and was conformable:

able to the Will of God in all things, would do such an Action or no. If you think upon a due Estimation and Collation of things that he would not, neither by my advice should you. For to be sure that which would not become *Christ* to do, can never be fit for a *Christian*.

XXXVI.

To exemplifie these two Rules, by an Instance applicable to both: Suppose you were invited or otherwise disposed to go to a *Ball* or a *Play*; before you adventure to do so, I would advise you to pause a while, and consider, whether you can possibly make

make any reference of such an Action as that is, to the Glory of God; whether you can in any true Sense or real meaning say thus, Lord I do this thing, I go to this *Play* or this *Ball*, for thee and for thy sake; in the force of thy Love, and in pursuance of thy Glory. If your Conscience answers no, I would by no means advise you to go. But if it answers doubtfully, and with Hesitation and Suspence, I would then have you put your selves to this Question, Whether or no you do in your Conscience really think, that the Holy and Blessed Jesus, according to that Character and Representation you have of him, and his way of

of living, in the Gospel, would, if now again upon Earth, do such an Action? Whether you do verily think, that it would consist with that Grave, Serious and recollected Spirit, and that constant Air of Devotion and Religious Severity, which appear'd in our Saviour's ordinary Life, and the general way of his Conversation, to go to a Play or a Ball, and whether you think he would do it? If upon a serious Consideration you think he would not, whatever plausible Arguments you may hear from others, or suggest to your selves for the Lawfulness of it, I would by no means advise you to venture upon such an

an Action, to do that which you your ſelves at the ſame time think your Lord and Maſter would not do; and yet, which conſidering the ſtrength of his Vertue, and that Force and Power he had to withſtand the greateſt Temptations, he might more ſafely do than you.

XXXVII.

To the foregoing Conſiderations I ſhall only add one more, and which I ſhall recommend to you as a general and very compendious Inſtrument for your aſſiſtance towards a Holy and Religious Life, and that is, That you would bring your ſelves to

to an Habitual Senſe and Conſideration of the *Omniſcience* and *Omniſcience* of God, that by reaſon of the Infinity both of his Eſſence and Knowledge, he is preſent in every Place, and privy to every Thought, that you cannot go where he is not, or do what he does not ſee; that you have your Life, Motion, and Being in him, and that you are always under his Eye; that he is about your Path, and about your Bed, and ſpies out all your ways, which are better known to him than they are to your ſelves; that he is an Eſſence without Bounds, and a Light without Darkneſs; that he ſees and knows every thing, and is

every

every where; and that you cannot Sin againſt him, but you muſt Sin in him. Conſider this, and *ſtand in awe, and Sin not*; *Commune with your own Hearts, and in your Chamber* (in your moſt ſecret Retirements) *and be ſtill*, having your Thoughts and Paſſions ſo quiet and compoſed, and in ſuch decent Silence and Repoſe, as becomes that awful Preſence you are in, even when moſt alone. Habituate your ſelves to ſet God always *before you*, as you are always *before him*; and let every Place be to you as a Temple, as an Holy of Holies, yea, even as Heaven it ſelf; that ſo being always in his Light, and having your Eye fix'd upon his,

you

you may not dare to commit any Indecency, left you be found guilty of that moſt aſtoniſhing Impudence of the Apoſtate Angels, of Sinning in the very *Face* and *Preſence* of God.

XXXVIII.

This is all that I have to offer you by way of rational *Reflection* and *Conſideration*, for your Incitement to a Holy Life, and your Aſſiſtance in it. I ſhall now only commend to you ſome few things by way of *Practice* and *Exerciſe*, in order to the ſame End, and ſo conclude all I have to ſay to you upon this occaſion.

XXXIX.

XXXIX.

If therefore you would be truly Good and Religious, Holy in all manner of Converſation, and govern your Lives and Actions well, let it be your firſt and great Care to govern your *Thoughts*, to look to the Springs and Wheels of your Intellectual Frame; and as the Wiſe Man adviſes, *To keep your Hearts with all Diligence*, to keep them Pure and Undefiled, ſince out of them are the Iſſues both of Life and Death: Which tho a certain and neceſſary Duty, as being one of thoſe particular Improvements whereby the Chriſtian has advanc'd the

the Jewiſh Law, I would not have you look upon ſo much as a New Commandment of it ſelf, as a more eaſie Method and Expedient of performing all the reſt.

XL.

Further, Be adviſed in all that you do, to ſet your ſelves at the greateſt diſtance from Evil, to abſtain from all Appearances of it, and from all Beginnings and Approaches towards it. From all *Appearances* of it chiefly upon the account of others, and that you may avoid giving Scandal and Offence. From all *Beginnings* and Approaches towards it chiefly for your own

ſakes, as gaining a threefold Advantage by ſuch a Diſtance, in that you will thereby enjoy a greater *Innocence*, greater *Eaſe*, and greater *Safety*. Greater Innocence, as being by this means intirely and wholly free from the Guilt of thoſe Sins which you forbear; not ſo much as being within the firſt Degrees, or touching upon the edges and borders of them. Greater eaſe, becauſe 'tis eaſier to abſtain from the firſt Beginnings of Sin, than from a further Progreſs in it after you have once begun. As 'tis eaſier to prevent your firſt Motions down a Hill, than to ſtop your deſcent when once in motion. Nor is there ſo much difficulty

difficulty in not admitting, as in ejecting a Temptation after 'tis once lodg'd, and has been kindly entertain'd. And lastly, by this Practice you will enjoy greater Safety, because greater Ease; there being not so much danger of yielding to what you can so easily forbear, as to that whose forbearance is more painful and uneasie. For the danger of chusing Sin, increases according to the greatness of the Evil which you avoid by chusing it; and he that would suffer four degrees of Pain rather than Sin, would yet perhaps rather Sin than suffer five degrees of Pain. For which reason,

XLI.

I adviſe you again, to leſſen as much as you can, the natural weight of your Concupiſcence, by a *Privation* of *Pleaſure*, and by a continual Denial and Mortification of your Senſes and Paſſions. For the more you indulge your ſelves in the Enjoyment of Pleaſure, the more you inflame your natural Thirſt after it, and the more you make your ſelves Slaves to it. And the leſs you indulge it, and the more Sparing and Abſtemious you are in it, the more cold and indifferent you will grow towards it. Your Deſires will contract themſelves for want

want of being gratified (as Men by much Faſting loſe their Stomacks) and after many repeated Denials, will at length ceaſe to crave, and ſo your natural Concupiſcence will decreaſe and abate much of its weight. Which you will find to be a thing of vaſt Advantage and Importance in order to a good Life. For by this means you will be the more fix'd and ſteddy in adhering to your Duty, as having the leſs Temptation to tranſgreſs it; and not only ſo, but you will alſo make ſuch degrees of God's Grace become Succeſsful and Efficacious upon you, which otherwiſe would not be ſo, ſince a leſs meaſure of Grace

will ſuffice, where there is leſs Concupiſcence to reſiſt it. For it is clear and certain, that the Efficacy of Divine Grace does ordinarily depend upon the Diſpoſition in which it finds us, in relation to ſenſible Good, as the action of a Weight in a Ballance does depend, as to its effect, upon the power and force of the Weight that is oppoſite. And let me tell you, that this is the only certain way that you have in your power, to render the Grace of God Prevalent and Effectual. For 'tis with the Will of Man as with a *Ballance*, both whoſe Scales are charg'd with their reſpective Weights; in which, if you would have this or that deter-

determinate Scale weigh down, there are but two poſſible ways of doing it, either by adding more weight to that which you would have predominant, or by leſſening the weight that is in the other. But now we cannot make the Grace of God Efficacious the firſt way, by adding more weight to that Scale of the Will, (for we have not the Grace of God in our power or diſpoſal, ſo as to diſtribute what we pleaſe of it to our ſelves.) All therefore that we can do towards it, is only to leſſen the weight of Concupiſcence that is in the other Scale, which indeed amounts to the ſame, as if more degrees of Grace were

added; and by this means we may contribute to make the Grace of God Succesful and Victorious. Which I take to be the true Reason and Usefulness of *Mortification* and *Self-denial*, which by Privation of sensible Pleasure, lessens the Desire or Concupiscence of it, and so serves to further the Prevalency and Efficacy of Grace: Upon which is grounded that remarkable Counsel given by our Saviour (the very same that I now give you,) *He that will come after me, let him deny himself.*

XLII.

To this Mortification of your Senses and Passions, and Privation

Privation of ſenſible Pleaſures, I would have you in the next place (as far as the Circumſtances of your Life will allow) to joyn *Retreat* and *Solitude*; to Converſe as much with your ſelves, and as little with the World as you can. Were the World never ſo much better than we find it is, or can hope it will, this would be very *expedient* Counſel; but as it now is, it is plainly *neceſſary*. For the preſent Corruption of the World is ſuch, that 'tis danger enough to live in it, tho a Man be not very intimate, or much Converſant with it. But as for thoſe that are ſo, their Condition is extremely Hazardous; and they had

need have a much greater Measure of Grace than other Men, to make it Secure. For if the *Friendship* of the World be (as St. *James* tells us) Enmity with God, sure even to have familiar *Commerce* and intimate Conversation with it, cannot but greatly endanger our Interest in his Love. The truth is, there is little to be got, and a great deal to be lost by being much abroad, and by using much the Conversation of Men; especially in publick Places, and promiscuous Companies. Their Hearts are generally Corrupt, and that makes their Discourse so; which even when most Civil and best govern'd, serves for little

rle elſe, but to raiſe falſe Idea's in the Minds of the Hearers, to confirm them in their Prejudices, to renew upon them them their ill Impreſſions; and to inſinuate into them the Love of ſenſible Objects. The Language of the World is generally that of *Concupiſcence*; which being the leading and governing Principle in Mens Hearts, becomes the Spring that gives Motion to their Tongues; and is the Seiſin and Leven that mixes and diffuſes it ſelf with all all their Communications; which therefore for the moſt part carry a poiſonous Breath, a Spirit of Malignity with them; and at beſt, are impertinent and fallacious, full of

of illusion and deceit; misrepresenting, confounding, and transposing the Natures of things; putting Evil for Good, and Good for Evil; Darkness for Light, and Light for Darkness; and teaching Men to apprehend things either quite otherwise, or at least much greater or less than they really are; and so utterly deceiving them either in the Nature, or in the Proportion of Things. But after all, the *Examples* of the World are by much, more dangerous than its *Discourſings*; and good Manners are more corrupted by its ill *Preſidents*, than by its ill *Communications*. For beſides that, generally Mens way of living is leſs Con-

Conformable to Order and Reaſon than their Diſcourſe, (it being more eaſie to talk well, than to act well) there is alſo this further difference, that their Example is a breathing and living Language, a Language that enters and perſwades thoſe to whom it is addreſs'd, a Language that every body underſtands; and (ſuch is the force of imitation) which very few find it in their power to reſiſt. We can lend an Ear to what People talk, without being preſently, or very much diſpoſed to Act it; but there is a ſort of Sympathy in us that inclines us, even before we think of it, and as it were *Mechanically* to do what we ſee

see others do. And besides we think our selves in a manner obliged to do it, upon a mistaken Notion of Civility and Complaisance; and to avoid the unpardonable Offence of being singular, and of Condemning the general by our own private Conduct. And therefore, since upon both these Accounts, there is so much danger in Society, (I speak of *Common* Society; for I am not conversing with a few well-chosen Friends;) and, considering the maligity of popular Discourses, and popular Examples, you can hardly Converse much in the World without partaking of its Spirit, and being seis'd by its Infection, I would

would adviſe you to retire from it as much as conveniently you can; and declining all unneceſſary Ingagements and Alliances, to betake your ſelves to the ſafe Harbour of Solitude and Retreat; where you may breathe a purer Air, live to God and your ſelves; attend with leſs Diſtraction upon the Grand Concern; and withall, Pray for thoſe who are out abroad, and *paſſing the Waves of this troubleſome World.*

XLIII.

And that you may employ your Solitude the better, I would have you retire much within your ſelves, as well as

as from the Noiſe and Tumult of the World: Converſe much with your own Thoughts, (which when all is done, you will find to be the beſt and moſt inſtructive Company) obſerve narrowly the Movements of your Wills and Affections; examine your Lives, make frequent Reflections upon the State of your Souls, and endeavour to improve the Perfection both of your Intellectual and Moral Part, by meditating upon the beſt Subjects, and by reading the beſt Books. And thoſe I call ſo, which ſavour moſt of the Life and Spirit of Religion; and are moſt apt to transfuſe it into the Hearts and Minds of

of their Readers. As for *Plays* and *Romances*, I would have you wholly decline the uſe of them. For that's to defeat the Ends of your Retirement by bringing the World into your Cloſet. And for ought I know, you were better be abroad and publick in the World, than to have the World with you thus in private. Not that I think the reading ſuch Books abſolutely unlawful; but only that there is a great deal of Danger and Corruption in them: And that as to the Wit, Language, and other Embelliſhments that they pretend to, and for which the Admirers of them recommend their Uſe, the ſame may be met with

with in better Books; which have all the *Beauty* and *Sweetneſs*, without the *Poiſon*. Nor would I have you beſtow much time in reading Books of *Controverſie*, and Diſputes about Religion: 'Tis a thing of great Labour, and but little profit, there being not ſo much *Truth* gain'd by it as will Compenſate for the Loſs of *Charity*. For that which the World is pleas'd to call *Controverſie*, is generally little elſe than a *Litigious Wrangle*, proceeding upon Darkneſs and Obſcurity, Fallacies and Equivocations, double Acceptation of Words, and Confuſion of Idea's; from Mens miſtaking and miſ-ſtating the thing in Queſtion; from miſ-

miſ-underſtanding of the Point, of themſelves, and of one another. And while Men do ſo, they may diſpute for ever, without knowing when they agree, or when they differ. Leave therefore theſe Wranglers to enjoy the Duſt which they raiſe, and while they *Diſpute*, do you learn to *Live*. Only *Philoſophy* I would not have you neglect; but, if you have Education and Opportunity for it, to make a conſiderable part of your Study. For that will open and inlarge your Minds, give you true thorough Views and Idea's of things, bring you acquainted with your ſelves as well as with External Nature, and lay an excellent Ground

Ground and Foundation for Morality and Religion. But when I ſpeak of Philoſophy, I mean true Philoſophy; not that which reigns in the Schools, (which after a great deal of Time and Pains ſpent in it, I think to be a mere Fantaſtick *Amuſement*, made up of inſignificant Terms, and a company of looſe indeterminate Maxims, all built upon dark unintelligible Principles; and therefore to be as great a Corruption of the *Underſtanding*, as ſome of thoſe things but now mention'd are of the *Will* and *Manners*) but the *Carteſian* and the *Experimental* Philoſophy. But becauſe the latter of theſe will require a greater Stock of

of Wealth and Temporal Eſtate, for the due Proſecution of it, than you are ever like to receive from me, I mention it only for order's ſake, adviſing you chiefly to imploy what vacant Hours you have from things of an higher Importance, in the thorough Study and repeated Peruſal of *Deſcartes* his Philoſophy: Which notwithſtanding the Imputation of Atheiſm, which ſome are pleaſed to throw upon it (a Silly Charge, and ſuch as nothing but their Ignorance of him can excuſe) I take to be the only intelligible Frame of Natural Science that has yet appear'd in the World, and the only intire Syſtem that deſerves

deſerves the name of *Philoſophy*. And tho perhaps every thing be not exactly true in it, yet I think there is nothing in it but what is *truly intelligible*; and withall, that there is ſo much of real Truth in it, as, if well purſued, will lead you into a great deal more; and ſuch Truths too, as are of the greateſt Importance in order to a well-principled Theory of Morality and Religion. But if you would have a general Inſtrument of Knowlege, an univerſal Key, a Book that will thoroughly regulate, order, and form your Underſtandings, and teach you how to uſe your Intellectual Powers for the avoiding of Error; and conduct you in

in the Search of Truth, (a Search almoſt as Unſucceſsful as that of *Happineſs*) that will inſtruct you in the moſt Fundamental Theories, and prepare you for all that is further intelligible, that will purifie and refine your Minds, and brighten, clear up and inlarge your Thoughts; that will rid you of all your Prejudices and Senſible Prepoſſeſſions, give you clear and diſtinct Idea's of things, and furniſh you with true and ſolid Principles of Science, and with the moſt neceſſary and important Concluſions. In fine, If you would have a Book that is alone a *Library*, and an ever-riſing and flowing Spring of Knowledge, that

that ought never to be out of your Hands, but always to be read, ſtudied, dwelt and fed upon till it be digeſted, made your own, and converted as it were into the very Subſtance of your Souls, let me recommend to you *M. Malebranche de la Recherche de la Verite*, a Book (tho for ſome conſiderable while extant) but little known, and whoſe worth is leſs underſtood, which the *falſly Learned* hate, becauſe they cannot endure its *Light*, and yet of ſuch excellent and univerſal Uſe, that 'tis great pity any Study ſhould be without it, or any Perſon ignorant of it, that is capable of underſtanding it. For indeed, to ſpeak out freely what

what I think (tho it be a more nice and hazardous thing to give Characters of Books than of Men) I take it to be upon all accounts one of the beſt Books that is in the World; and that of all Human Compoſures, there is none that does better ſerve the Intereſts of Truth, and of true Religion. I ſay *Religion*, for that ought to be the End of all, and thither I muſt again return, adviſing you to employ your Solitude and Retirement chiefly in the Religious and Devotional part, in Prayer and Divine Meditations, and in reading the Holy Scriptures, and other good and profitable Books, and ever to remember, that

in the greateſt Solitude you are not *alone*.

XLIV.

But whether you be in Solitude or in Company, let this be your general Rule and Practice, *To ſtudy the Imitation of Chriſt*, to form your ſelves upon his Model, and to conform your inward Spirit, and your outward Converſation, to his Divine Example, who ſpent his Solitudes in Devotion, and his more publick Converſes in Works of Mercy and Charity, doing good both to the Bodies and to the Souls of Men. Jeſus Chriſt is propoſed to us as our great Pattern and Example, as well as

as Law-giver and Teacher; and he would not have been a compleat Teacher without it, his Example being one (and perhaps the moſt powerful) way whereby he teaches us. One great reaſon of our Saviour's leading ſuch an excellent and exact Life was, that we might take a Copy of it, and uſe it as a Pattern and Model upon all Occaſions; and it may be this is the only reaſon of its being recorded and tranſmitted to Poſterity, that among the infinite ill Examples we continually meet with in the World, we might have one ſtanding and never-failing Preſident, both for our Direction and our Encouragement

in the ways of Holineſs. And indeed 'tis the beſt Pattern we have, and the only one which we can intirely follow, and which alone will lead us to Heaven. Chriſt is a ſure and ſafe Guide, and ſuch as may be follow'd without Doubt or Danger. For ſo he himſelf tells us, that he is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and that he that follows him walks not in Darkneſs; as indeed how ſhould he, having the true Light of the World before him. Let me therefore conclude all my Spiritual Inſtructions with this general Advice, To form to your ſelves in the firſt place, from frequent reading of the Goſpel, as true an Idea of the Spirit

Spirit and Life of Christ, as possibly you can. And then to form your own Spirits and Lives upon this Divine Model, consulting this great Idea in all Accidents and Emergencies, having it always before you, and your Eye steddily fix'd upon it, that so you may draw as near the Life as may be, and may as far as the Condition of Human Infirmity will permit, be Followers of God as Dear Children. Consider him therefore in his Retirements, when conversing with God; and consider him in Company, when conversing with the World. Place him to your Eye in both Lights, and study to imitate his Devotion in the

former, and his great Charity in the latter, that ſo joyning the Excellencies of his Active and Contemplative Life together, and endeavouring to tranſcribe his Obedience to both the Tables of the Law, you may compleat and fill up your meaſure of Righteouſneſs, ever remembring that he is the *Beſt Chriſtian*, not that knows moſt, or believes moſt, or that can talk moſt of Chriſtianity, but, who is in Heart and Life the neareſt *Follower* of *Chriſt*.

XLV.

Theſe (my Children) are the moſt Material and Fundamental Inſtances of Spiritual

tual Counſel I have to bequeath to you, being the Reſults of my own Reaſon and Experience, which I adviſe you to conſider and to follow, and if you find (as I hope you will) benefit by them, be the more diligent in the uſe and obſervation of them, and the more Thankful to God for his Grace, upon all your Endeavours begging his Bleſſing. To whoſe eſpecial Care and good Providence I commit you, beſeeching him to beſtow both upon *you* and *me* ſuch a meaſure of his gracious Aſſiſtance, that we may all ſo live in his Fear, as to die in his Favour, and at laſt meet together in the Bleſſed Enjoyment of his Eternal Glory. *Amen.*

POSTSCRIPT.

THere are two Advices more that I ſhould have commended to you, and which you ſhall now have in the ſame order as they occur to my Thoughts. One of them is by way of *Conſideration* and the other is by way of *Practice*. That by way of Conſideration is this, That you would conſider that there can be no true Enjoyment of Life, till you are got above the Fear of Death, that alone being enough to ſtrike a Damp into all your Pleaſures and Enjoyments. And that the only thing that can put you above the Fear of Death, is

is a Good Life. And that therefore even upon this account there is an abſolute Neceſſity of living well, that you may live with any tolerable Comfort or Satisfaction, that you may enjoy your Lives while you have them. The other by way of Practice is this, That you would have ſuch a continual Watch & Guard upon your Thoughts and Actions, as never to tolerate your ſelves in ſuch a State of Life as you would be afraid to Die in. Becauſe, conſidering the uncertainty of Death, there is no aſſignable part of the time you live in, but what you may die in.

A General Prayer.

I Adore thee, O thou infinitely Great and Good God, Maker and Lord of Heaven and Earth: Worthy art thou, O Lord, to receive all Honour and Power; for thou hast Created all things, and for thy Pleasure they are and were Created.

Send down thy holy Spirit, O most merciful Father, upon me thy Servant; and so fill me with thy Heavenly Grace and Benediction, that I may become a Living Temple, sanctified and devoted to thy Honour and Service; and such wherein thou may'st delight to dwell, and make the place of thy rest and abode both now and for ever.

And

And to this end, grant me ſeriouſly to conſider what thou art, what I my ſelf am, and what I ought to be. That thou art a God greatly to be fear'd for thy Power and Juſtice, greatly to be loved for thy infinite Perfection and Goodneſs, and greatly to be praiſed for thy liberal Bounty and Loving-kindneſs. That thou art both the Author and the End of my Being, my true and only Good, the Cauſe of all my Joy and Happineſs; and the great Centre and Stay of thy whole Creation.

Grant me alſo ſeriouſly to conſider what I my ſelf am, that I am a Creature; One that once was not, and is now a poor, empty, weak and imperfect Being.

ing. That I have nothing but what I receive from thee, that I can do nothing but what I do by thee, that I can know nothing but what I know in thee and in thy Light; and that in thee I have my Life, my Motion, my Being, my Happineſs, and my all.

Grant me alſo ſeriouſly to conſider, that I am not only thy Creature, but my Own; not only a Creature, but a ſinful Creature; a Creature acting againſt the End of his Creation; againſt the Law of his Creator; againſt the Dignity of his Nature, and againſt his true and beſt Intereſt, both here and hereafter. That I have not loved thee as in ſtrictneſs I ought; with my whole Heart, Soul,

Soul, and Mind and Strength, nor as I might, according to the Measures of thy Grace, and my present Abilities; nor indeed as I have loved this World, and the Vanities of it, having been a lover of Pleasure more than a lover of God.

Grant me also lastly, thy Grace seriously to consider what I should be both towards Thee, my Neighbour, and my Self. That I ought to be Holy, Just, Charitable, and Temperate. That I ought not to live carelessly and at random, as those that have no Sense of thee, nor of their Duty; and that believe neither Heaven nor Hell, but as one that now lives in thy Presence, and must hereafter give thee an Account,

and

and be Eternally Happy or Eternally Miſerable, according as he demeans himſelf in this ſhort time of Trial. And that therefore denying all ungodlineſs and Worldly Luſts, I ſhould live Godly, Righteouſly, and Soberly in this preſent World; looking for that bleſſed Hope, and the Glorious appearing of the Great God, and of our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt. Fix O Lord, theſe Conſiderations in my Mind, and let them ſink down ſo deep into my Heart, that they may bring forth in me the Fruits of good Living; that ſo my Spirit may be Pure and Right within me, my Life may be Holy, my Death Comfortable, my Reſurrection Joyful, and my Eternal

ternal State Happy and Glo-
rious with thee my God for
ever. Amen.

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